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SUBJECT: DUMA READY TO BACK CFE SUSPENSION, CHAIRMAN SAYS

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SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting with NSC Senior Director Warlick and EUR DAS Kramer, International Affairs Committee Chairman Kosachev underscored the Duma's support for the suspension of CFE on December 12, absent a change in the U.S. position and reiterated GOR opposition to any linkage to Istanbul commitments. Kosachev suggested that Putin's leadership of United Russia did not guarantee a constitutional majority for the ruling party, but did spell the end for Just Russia. Kosachev underscored the Duma's readiness to move forward on outstanding WTO-related legislation, support for negotiations with Iran, and rejection of a U.S.-driven timeline for Kosovo's independence. End Summary.

CFE SUSPENSION

¶2. (SBU) In a meeting with NSC Senior Director Warlick and EUR DAS Kramer on October 10, Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Kosachev outlined the legislative steps involved in Russia's proposed December 12 "suspension" of the CFE Treaty. Kosachev said the Duma will discuss the CFE treaty suspension in a plenary session likely to take place the first week of November. This follows committee hearings held September 19 and a decision in support of suspension taken on October 10. A Duma resolution calling for suspension of the treaty will go to the Federation Council for ratification and then to the President for signature. The Duma action follows a 150-day period from the day on which President Putin issued the decree to suspend the treaty (July 13). Kosachev saw little room for maneuver and said changes to Russia's current position would only occur if the U.S. changed its position. "If nothing happens from the U.S. side, then Russia will suspend."

CFE AND ISTANBUL AGREEMENTS

¶3. (SBU) Kosachev reiterated the GOR stance that the Istanbul Commitments of 1999 are not linked to CFE. All issues concerning Georgia are "completely settled," including withdrawal from Gudauta, he said. On Moldova, Kosachev argued that limits established in CFE were accomplished by Russia in ¶2002. In response to a suggestion that the Russian peacekeeping force in Moldova be transitioned into an

international force, Kosachev stated that "this has nothing to do with CFE." A proposal to have parallel actions involving movement on the Istanbul Commitments, while allies work to ratify the Adapted CFE, was met with a comment that "the impression of the Russian Ministry of Defense is that your country does not want to adopt (Adapted) CFE and this is a pretext to avoid it."

¶4. (SBU) Kosachev warned that peacekeepers in Moldova should be kept out of the discussion. In his view, peacekeepers are separate from a discussion on Transnistria's political status. "The issue of Russians guarding munitions is not worth a loss of confidence, ruining a treaty and our bilateral relationship."

DOMESTIC POLITICS

¶5. (SBU) Kosachev, a member of the ruling United Russia (YR) party, said "everyone" had hoped Putin would join their party's list but no one knew for sure -- including party leaders -- until Putin made his announcement. It was a "personal decision," Kosachev said. "It makes our life harder, not easier, because we must meet a high level of (expectation)." According to him, a simple majority was realistic, but a constitutional majority will be more difficult. He said internal polls have shown a 5-6 percent increase in support which is not enough for a constitutional majority.

¶6. (SBU) Kosachev predicted that the pro-Kremlin Just Russia party could receive only 5-6 percent of the vote, according to polls conducted by YR. "They are not popular and now it will be even more difficult," Kosachev said. He attributed the party's problems to the collection of diverse parties that merged to become Just Russia. "They were not prepared to compromise," he said.

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¶7. (SBU) Although no one knows what the Duma will look like after the election, Kosachev said there could be a merger of the International Affairs and CIS committees. Kosachev would not say for sure whether he would keep his position as Chairman. He expressed continued interest in pursuing interparliamentary contacts and said the Hyde/Lantos format had worked well.

WTO, IRAN AND KOSOVO

¶8. (SBU) Kosachev said outstanding WTO-related legislation will be in no danger when it comes to the Duma. Experts have followed the discussions closely and are aware of the need to ensure that Russian legislation is compatible with WTO requirements, he said.

¶9. (SBU) On Iran, Kosachev characterized the IAEA "plan" as "functional," noting that Iran has made progress on several issues in the action plan. Kosachev asserted that as long as Iran continued to cooperate with the IAEA, additional pressure on the regime will only undermine the international community's efforts.

¶10. (SBU) Kosachev criticized the U.S. timeline for Kosovo's independence, arguing that fallout over the issue could poison U.S.-Russian relations. He did not rule out GOR recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in response and concluded that "you are trapped if you continue to approach it this way."

¶11. (U) This telegram has been cleared by NSC Senior Director Warlick and EUR DAS Kramer.
Burns